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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the documents in this series is to provide educators in Saskatchewan with practical and relevant guides to teaching and learning as a means of expanding or refining teaching repertoires. This publication explores individualizing for students, emphasizing that what the classroom teacher does depends on his/her abilities and beliefs about education and learning, and on resources and students in the classroom. The guide acts as a starting point for individualizing; it contains a collection of activities that have been tried, along with tips that have worked for other educators. The individualizing process is explored through the utilization of variety, choice, options, and self-directed learning. Each level or step is successively more student-directed and student-centered. Space is provided throughout the document for thoughts on how these ideas might be adjusted to best suit individual students. The document concludes with a list of 10 resources, each with a brief annotation. (LL)

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Ideas for Individualizing in the Classroom

SP 034 708

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES SERIES NO. 7

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A need to create documents useful to educators in the area of instructional practice appears evident. With this in mind The Saskatchewan Instructional Development and Research Unit (SIDRU) and The Saskatchewan Professional Development Unit (SPDU) have initiated a series of documents that are published jointly.

The overall purpose of these documents is to provide educators with practical and relevant guides to various ways to teaching and learning as a means to expand or refine teaching repertories. We sincerely hope you enjoy using these documents.

Prepared for
The Saskatchewan Professional Development Unit
and
The Saskatchewan Instructional Development and Research Unit
by

Mills Consulting

Mills Consulting Saskatoon

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Individualizing for your students depends on you, your students, and your resources.

There is no one right way to individualize in the classroom.

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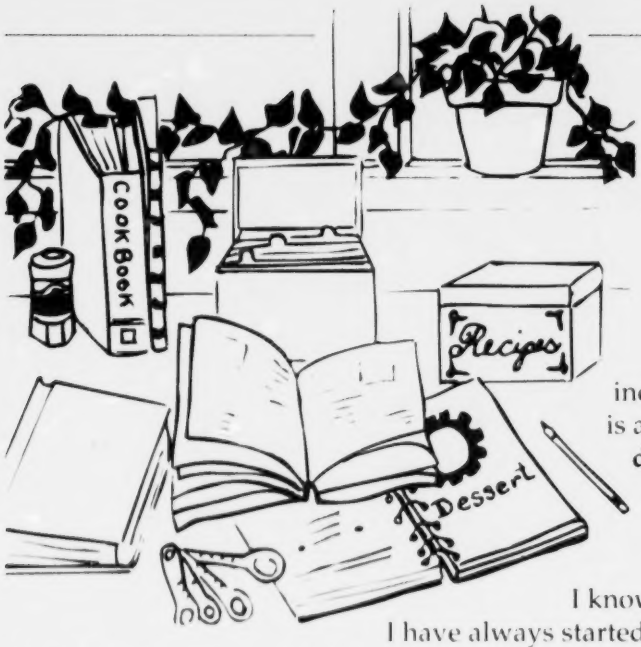


Introduction

There is irony in writing a how-to book on individualizing – how individual can it be when it is a recipe? **Individualizing for your students depends on you, your students, and your resources. There IS no one right way to individualize in the classroom.**

I know that when I cook (with any degree of success!), I have always started with a recipe that has been tested by others. Over time I may vary the ingredients ever so slightly each time to develop something that is better suited to our family. The recipe book remains on the shelf as I "create" based on my past experiences – successes and failures. The delightful surprise comes, after a few years, when I have stumbled upon the original recipe; I recognize the origins of the dish we now enjoy, one that has changed into one that is more in line with what we like.

I also use recipe books for ideas for new things to try when meal times are getting rather repetitious and everything starts looking the same; varying the shape of the pasta each day doesn't constitute much variety. Recipe books can be full of inspiration and fresh approaches.

There have also been times when I have used recipe books to find out where I have gone wrong! Sometimes intuitive cooking doesn't quite work out and by using recipe books as a reference I can make the necessary adjustments to my creation. Sometimes only small changes are needed and other times the intuitive recipe requires a total revamping.

When preparing a meal, cooks have several factors to take into account:

- their cooking abilities,
- personal beliefs about nutrition and diet,
- the resources that are available and the cost of the ingredients, and
- the people who will be sharing in the prepared meal – their likes and dislikes, possible allergies, personal beliefs.

The same can be said for individualizing in the classroom. What you, as the classroom teacher do, depends on your abilities, your beliefs about education and learning, the resources you have available to you, and the students in your classroom.

Something for Every One is full of ideas for individualizing, a place to start, double-check what you are doing, or for inspiration. As you embark on your own self-directed learning on individualizing, this is one resource available to you. Other resources are listed at the end of the document. This document is like a recipe book in that it contains a collection of recipes that have been tried and tips that have worked for other educators as they individualize for the students in their classrooms. *Something for Every One* explores individualizing through:

- variety
- choice and options
- self-directed learning

Each level or step is successively more student-directed and student-centered.

We invite you to use this document as a starting point – an idea place – for your own journey into individualizing for the students in your classroom. Space is provided throughout the document for your own thoughts on how these ideas and recipes might be adjusted to best suit the students in your class and you.

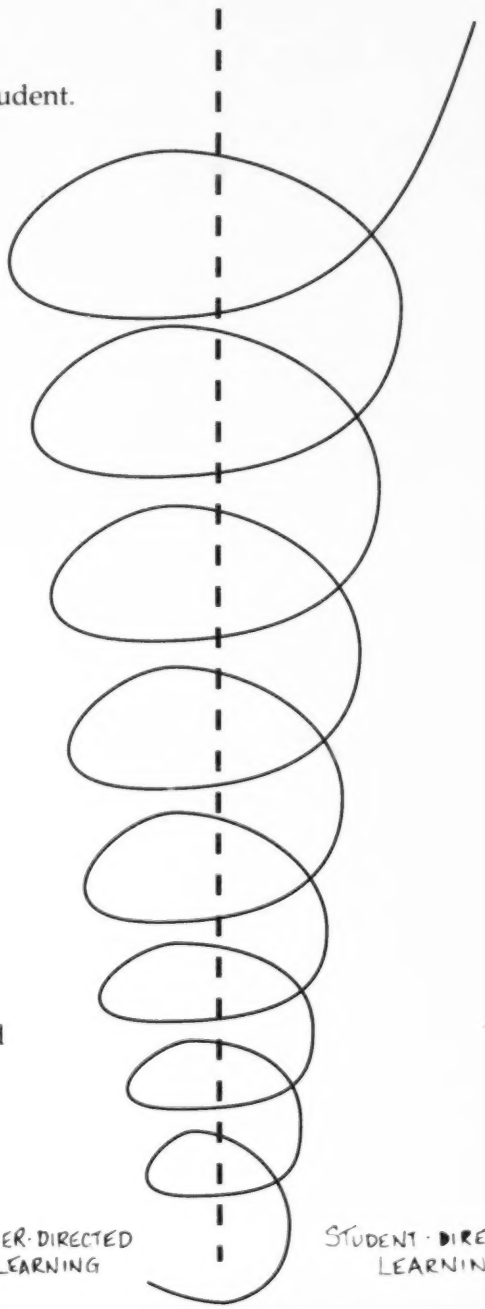
Work Space 1

You will find these spaces throughout the document. In this spot, before turning the page, we invite you to record what "individualizing" means to you.

For the purposes of this document

INDIVIDUALIZING is ...

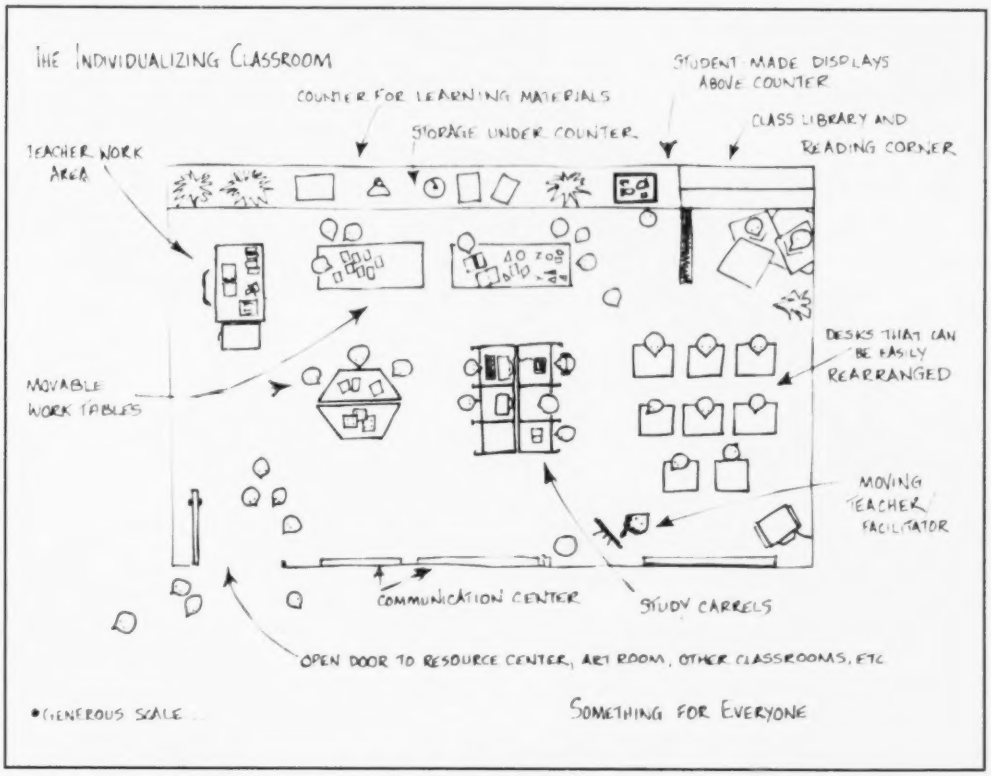
- Empowering students.
- Shifting control from the teacher to the student.
- Important and purposeful learning from the student's viewpoint.
- Another option in your teaching repertoire.
- Developing and developmental; a process.
- Hard work for student and teacher.
- Structured freedom.
- Rewarding.
- Difficult for some.
- Student centered.
- Motivational.
- Personalizing
- A journey along the spiral continuum of teacher-directed ⟶ student-directed



When individualizing is successful, you will most likely see ...

- Purposeful chaos.
- Students going in a variety of directions.
- Teachers acting as facilitators and coordinators.
- Small groups, partners, individuals.
- Variety.
- Flexible classroom arrangements.
- Teachers working with small groups or individuals, doing whole group planning, teaching or evaluating, and learning more about their students.

You will hear a productive buzz and feel a sense of purpose and enthusiasm as the students pursue their chosen endeavors.



For the purposes of this document

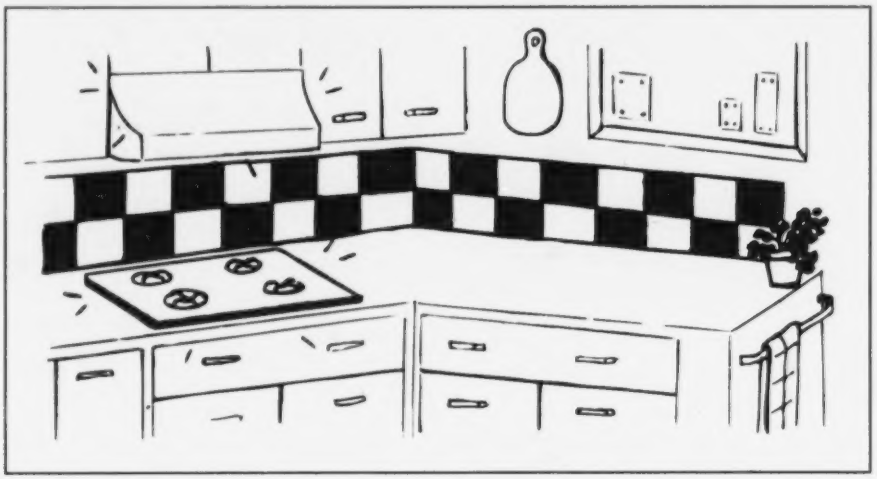
INDIVIDUALIZING is NOT ...

- Age or grade related or dependent.
- Students working all alone in a vacuum, individual learning, or the teacher abdicating responsibility.
- Easy for the teacher or the student - initially.

In a situation where "individualizing" is not working, the classroom might appear chaotic without any sense of purpose or direction; non-productive; and just plain noisy! Students will not appear to have a clear idea of what they are supposed to be doing or how to do it. Discipline problems and classroom management will require much attention. Expectations will not be evident. And the teacher will be looking quite frazzled, thinking, "I am not trying this again!"

OR

Students might be sitting at their own desks, overly quiet, with enthusiasm dulled by monotony. Beware the seat-work "contract" that is the same for everyone or the "learning centers" that are seat work on the move.



Work Space 2

A spot to list some concerns you might have about individualizing in your classroom...

Why Individualize?

1

To provide opportunities for learning that are more personally meaningful for each student in your class based on:

- preferred ways of learning and learning styles
- cultural diversity
- interests
- abilities and skill levels
- modality preferences (auditory, visual, symbolic, kinesthetic, synergic)

2

To help develop in students:

- self-esteem, self-concept, and confidence
- a sense of satisfaction with their own abilities
- motivation and challenge
- life-long, self-directed attitudes toward learning
- the ability to undertake and develop learning projects of their own choice

Individualizing is not easy. To begin with, like anything new, whether baking bread for the first time or using a new strategy, it requires more time and planning on the part of the teacher. The rewards, however, are great. The preparation time will most likely decrease once you have found some things that work for you and your students, and although most of the preparation will have to be done outside of class time, you will have more time in class to spend working with individuals and small groups.

The greatest reasons for individualizing are for the enthusiasm and sparkle your students will have in their eyes as they assume more and more responsibility for their own learning. Watch their progress during the school year.

Work Space 3

I am most interested in individualizing because...

The Place ...

I used to cook alone – before we had our two boys. The kitchen was set up for me to work efficiently. It was tidy, organized and peaceful. It still is fairly tidy and organized but no longer peaceful in the same way. We cook together whenever we can. The boys are learning about how and what to cook in an attractive, organized kitchen with a friendly (for the most part!), cheerful (for the most part!) chief cook. They help decide on the menu and the preparation of the food as much as they can. At ages three and two this means pouring chocolate chips in the cookie batter, tearing the lettuce, getting out the cereal, cracking some eggs. Our omelets are not without some shells or their smiles!

For me it is easier to cook and plan and clean up on my own. But Isaac and Taylor do not learn much or develop a great deal of enthusiasm when they just watch. They quickly move on to their toys when I do all the work. But ask them to get the carrots or stir the cookies, spray water over the pasta, or wash a few dishes and the toys remain untouched.

I cannot complain, though, if there is water splashed around the sink, or a few lumps of cookie batter on the counter. This is part of the messiness of learning. Real learning does not appear to be a very clean process! The kitchen is only tidy when nothing is happening.

Creating the proper place for individualizing is not an immediate thing, nor is it strictly a physical circumstance; many factors work together in a developmental way. Teacher and students work together in the development of experiences that lead to success. Taking small steps at the beginning and building into bigger steps.

Individualizing is all about handing over responsibility and control from the teacher to the learner as each one has abilities and skills. I cannot get Isaac and Taylor to whip up lasagna, a salad, and fresh bread for dinner quite yet! They don't have all the skills and abilities. It is up to me to teach them so some day they will be able to do this or a dinner that they have even planned themselves.

The classroom that is a conducive place has to have many of the qualities of the friendly kitchen.

- Materials are open and accessible for the students to use easily.

- Furnishings are flexible to allow for groups (small and large), partners, and individuals to work comfortably.

- The door can be opened readily and frequently so students can move easily into other parts of the school.

- Learning is valued over initial perfection.

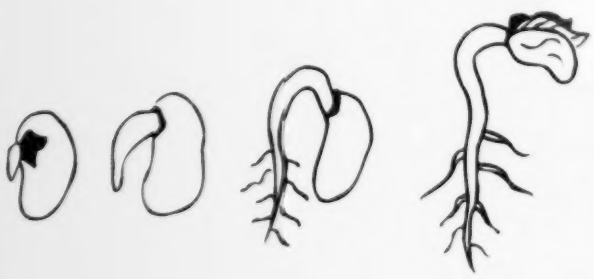
- Creativity and risk taking are seen as important parts of learning.

- A cooperative feeling is nurtured.

- The individual is valued.

- The students respect one another's opinions and ideas, and their own ideas are seen as relevant and important.

- Humour, warmth, and friendliness are critical components.



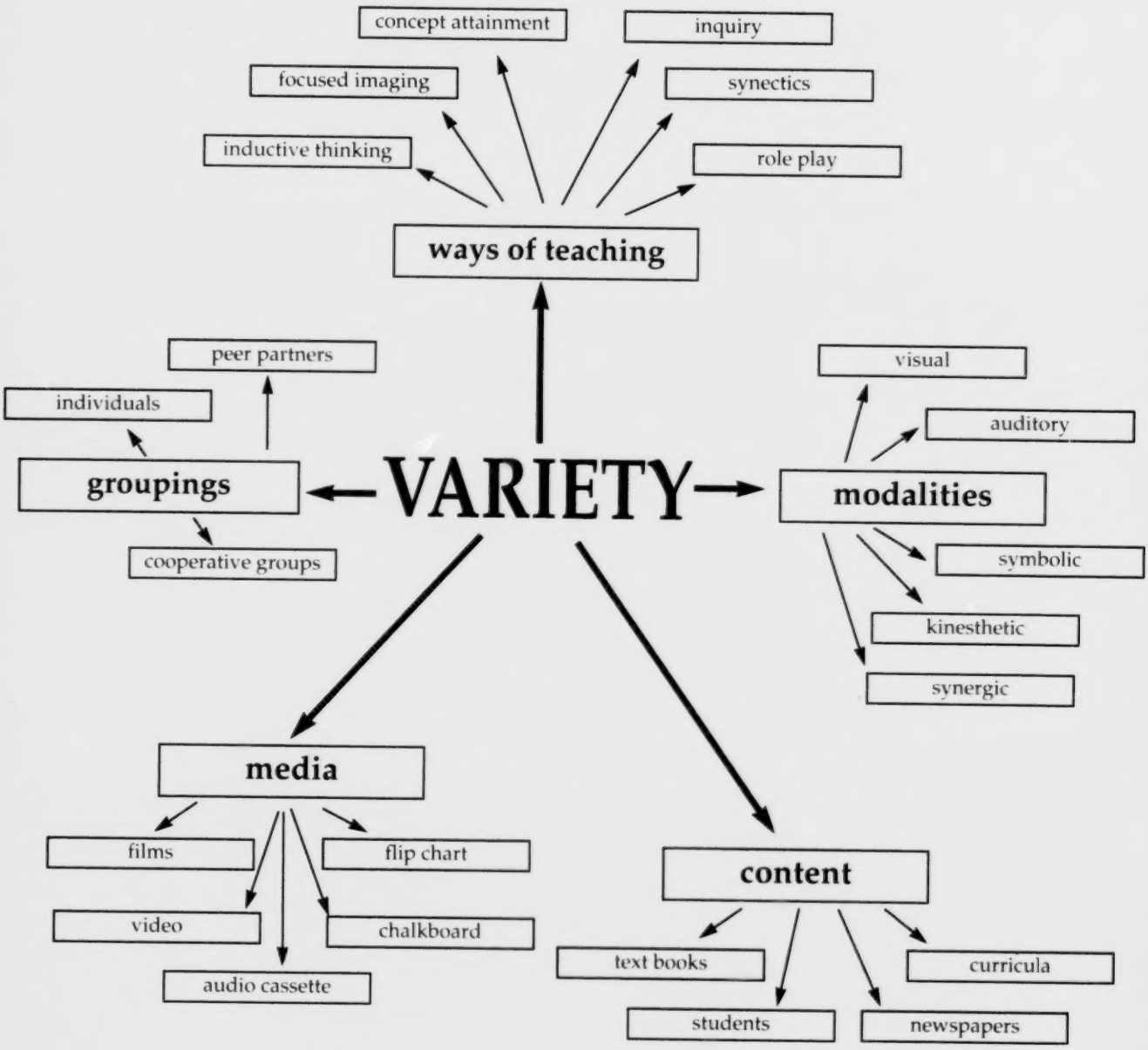
The Teacher's Role

- Provide → variety, choice, options
- Teach skills.
- Guide.
- Facilitate.
- Coordinate.
- Develop workable ways to track and share student progress.
- Work with students in their decision making and planning.
- Inform parents of what is happening. The enthusiasm of their children is contagious!
- Help students discover what is possible through realistic samples.
- Model self-directed learning and talk about what you are doing.
- Provide resources.

if I cook and give you a meal, you will eat for a day ...

if I help you learn to cook, you will eat all your days!

(a traditional saying) – adapted


concept attainment
inquiry
focused imaging
synectics
inductive thinking
role play
ways of teaching
peer partners
individuals
groupings
cooperative groups
VARIETY
visual
auditory
modalities
symbolic
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flip chart
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audio cassette
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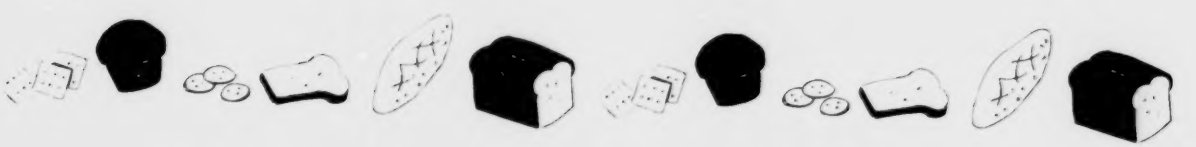
text books
curricula
students
newspapers



VARIETY:
The Spice of Life

A steady diet of pasta is rather the same as a steady diet of role playing, or cooperative learning, or model building, or report writing, or birds. Interest can only be sustained so long.

Variety in strategies, modalities (the way we process information), and content is stimulating for both the teacher and the learner. It is also one of the first ways to individualize. All students are still working together in an increasing variety of ways.

By creating variety in your classroom, you will also be providing experiences for all the different learners in your group ... they will have opportunities to work in ways that are a "good fit" for them and opportunities to grow by experiencing other ways of learning and doing.

Monday, September 10 (Grade 4)

9:00 SHARING ONE THING (current events, personal news, etc.)

- Use the beanbag for taking turns (review "TOSS")

9:10 SPELLING

- develop personal list of 10 words for the week
- pass out writing projects from last week to use words that were misspelled from there as well
- conference with each student as they complete their list
- three must-include words - science, geography and friendship

* Sandy seems to need extra help in choosing words

9:45 LANGUAGE ARTS

- begin unit on "friendship" by using concept attainment
- students work in pairs they choose
- discuss special friendship and introduce analogy by thinking of different things friendship is like
- individual journal entries about a friendship

* Remind students that they can use pencil crayons, too, if they wish

10:30 RECESS (playground supervision - talk to Jean about Care partners tomorrow!)

10:45 PHYS. ED.

- Cooperative Beanbag
- Mirrors (in partners from before recess)
- develop a movement mirror dance with partner
- share these with another pair

* remember tape deck and cassette!

11:15 SCIENCE

- Inquiry lesson on living and non-living things in the park

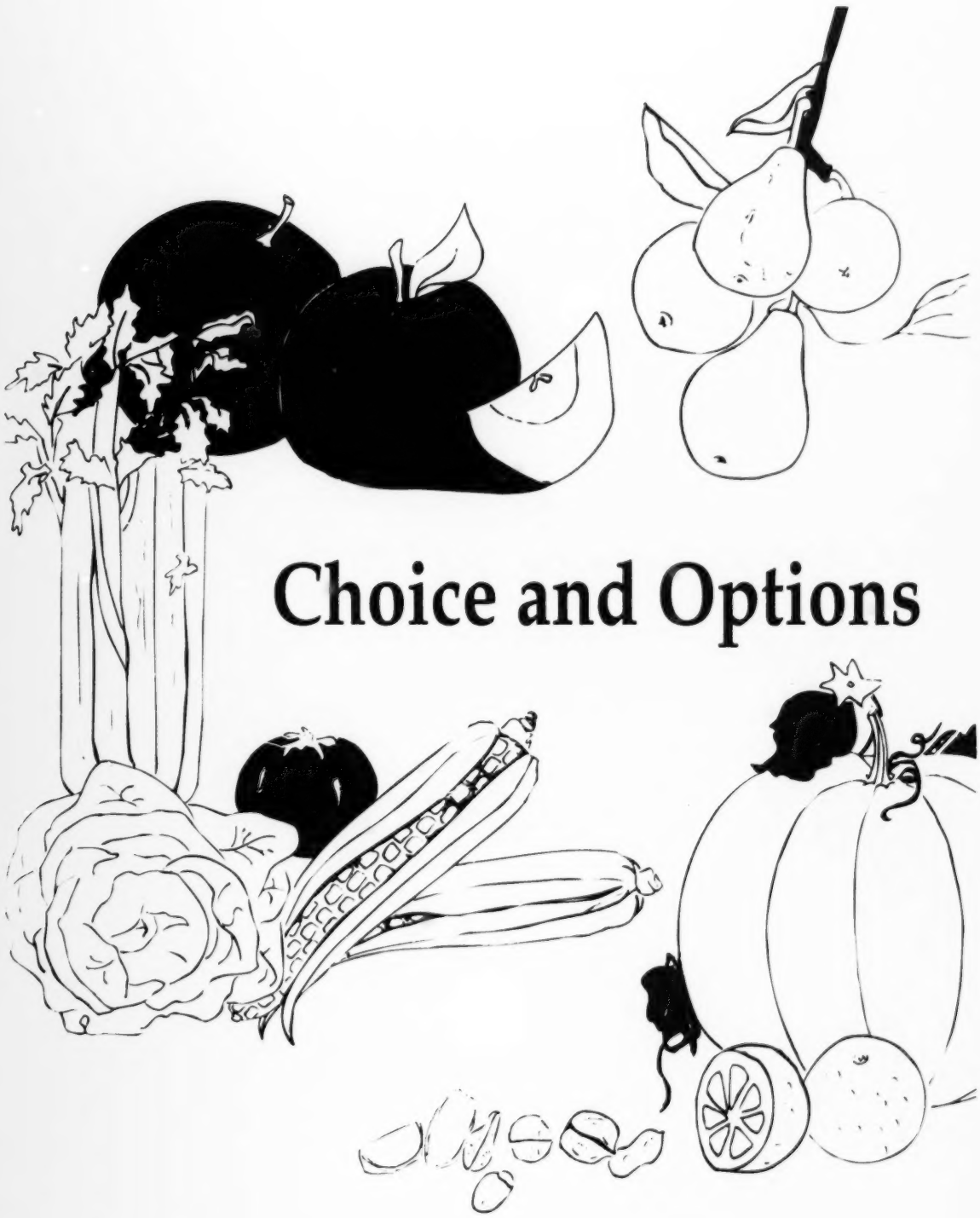
* class discussion to highlight main discoveries and set up expectations for next class

* Remind students to bring magazines, glue, and scissors for ME collage this afternoon

Work Space 4

A. Analyze the morning plan for this Grade 4 class for variety in strategies, modalities, and content.

B. Take a lesson you recently taught and think of other ways to teach that same lesson.



Choice and Options

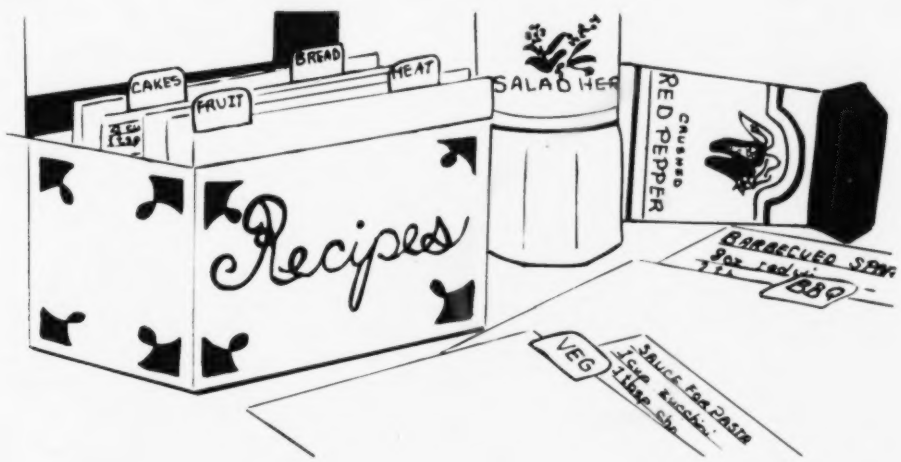
Choice & Options

Blessed are the poor in choices,
for they will have no trouble
in making up their minds.

Halcolm's Evaluation Beatitudes

There is a great deal of evidence that people feel more in charge and better about themselves when they have power to choose. Choosing can be as small as "Would you like carrots or corn tonight?" for a three-year-old, to deciding on content, process and evaluation for a student who has developed the necessary skills and levels of responsibility.

Choice is empowering and exciting for the learner. The following classroom examples (or recipes) illustrate differing levels of choice for the students through providing options. These examples worked well for the students and teachers who used them. When reading them keep you and your students in mind.



My Grade 3 students have some choice when we are doing math problem-solving. They work with a partner they choose; decide which 5 of the 10 problems they are going to do for practice; and then, once they have successfully solved these problems, they develop a word problem together for another pair to solve. The problems they create vary with the differing ability levels and interest. A great deal of enthusiasm is generated by the problem sharing and solving.

My high school students had the project of creating an issue of a magazine in art. They decided on the theme, what they would include in the magazine, and then divided up responsibilities according to who wanted to do what. I was always available when questions came up or they needed resources, opinions, or guidance.

Macbeth ... we studied the play together and then the students chose how they would like to do a final project based on the play. Dramas, poetic response, newspaper articles, critique, role play ... students chose a wide variety of ways to express their feelings about the play.

25

Notes

In this case the students have choice in WHAT they do within the given parameters. There is also variety in the problems they create.

Notes

Students had choice in WHEN with consequences for not managing time and responsibilities.

I used the sheet on page 21 with my grade 7 class in an inner city school. The students accomplished a great deal on these independent work days. They were independent in that each student decided how to organize his or her time and whether to work alone or in a small group or with a partner. On other occasions, they could sign up for lessons that were being offered by "the teacher" or a visiting resource person.

Before starting in with independent work days – or half days – we reviewed expectations and responsibilities, and used centers and contracts so that students were becoming familiar with making responsible decisions and managing their time. One rule existed: The list of things had to be completed during the allotted time.

Individualizing is also recognizing that the students will develop the necessary skills at varying rates. In this case, Robin needed extra practice and guidance in time management. The teacher acknowledged this and worked with Robin individually. The consequence was not dealt with as a punishment.

One particular student had a great deal of difficulty getting things completed so we discussed the problems Robin encountered. The consequence was that Robin's time was assigned during the next independent work day. It took several attempts over a number of weeks for Robin to learn how to manage time efficiently. We worked together and started small. I checked in with this student frequently and offered encouragement and helped out with "What should I do next?"

Independent work days were productive and a hit! By the end of the year, students were responsible for designing their own lists of TO DO's and setting their own schedules. We never did more than one session like this per week unless we were working with a special project.

As the teacher, I initially designed the lists, taught time management and organizational skills, monitored individual progress, marked assignments, and got my exercise by checking out the various O.K.'ed work spots - the library, science room, conference rooms, and our own classroom!

THURSDAY MORNING ASSIGNMENTS

MATH
- p. 195 Complete this assignment and correct it using the teacher's book.
- Practice sheet (on the table).

LANGUAGE
- "Kites" Read the first two sections in the kite booklet.
- Do the Kite SHEET (on the table).

SPELLING
- Complete the crossword puzzle and clues.

SOCIAL STUDIES
- Work on your report. The final copy is due May 16 – TOMORROW!

T.V. HOURS GRAPH
- Fill in your graph for Wednesday.

STAMINA READING
- Record the length of time you read.

Today I Accomplished These Things

- ❑ I completed p. 195 in Math.
- ❑ I corrected p. 195 using the answer book.
- ❑ I completed the Math practice sheet.
- ❑ I read the first two sections in the KITE BOOKLET.
- ❑ I completed the KITE sheet properly.
- ❑ I filled in my T.V. HOURS graph for Wednesday.
- ❑ I read silently for ____ minutes.
- ❑ I spent ____ minutes working on my Social report.
- ❑ I completed my crossword puzzle and clues.

THESE ASSIGNMENTS ARE TO BE COMPLETED BY 1:15 THIS AFTERNOON. Please keep all work at your desk except for the crossword puzzles. Hand these in on my desk.

The order in which you do the assignments is up to you. Watch the clock. You don't have the entire morning like last week. Music is at 11:20.

If there is something you don't understand, come and check with me. I hope you enjoy the morning.

Notes

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Notes

Students have choice in WHAT and WHEN with teacher guidance.

I use the four square method with my Grade 1-2 students to help them decide on which learning centers they will use throughout the morning. They fold their papers into four sections and in each section they draw the symbol or number for the learning center they wish to use. They decide, with my guidance, on the center and the order in which they wish to use the centers. I encourage the students to choose a variety of centers each day. Before we tried this approach the children became familiar with the centers and how to use them, and how to tidy up once they were finished.

Independent Novel Studies

After we had done one novel study together as a class, we tried independent novel studies. (We had planned the novel studies together.)

1. All students studied the same novel. After webbing (a sample "web" is on page 12) the novel, they worked with it in a variety of ways - ways that they chose. All activities were of equal weight and therefore required equal amounts of effort.

2. Students chose their own novels (in a particular theme or genre) with my help and the help of our teacher-librarian. After reading the novel, they chose activities from each of the categories (spelling, comprehension, creative response) that added up to a pre-determined total in each section. Some students seemed to do lots of "easy" 1* items and others liked to do larger projects.

Be prepared! I found there was a great deal of marking and record keeping involved. During class time, I was helping students and following up on assignments, and after class I was busy marking the assignments to be ready for the next day.

Independent studies can tend to drag on for some students. Being aware of how everyone is doing. Time for group sharing is really important. In this case, the students had an opportunity to choose the content they would be studying and the activities they would undertake.

Notes

Individually-paced Math Units

A) I chose to do a unit on geometry where students worked at their own pace.

The text did a thorough job of explaining the concepts indicated in the curriculum. The students had a list of assignments, resources, and checklists. I marked all their assignments so I would always know where they were. Early on, the class seemed to separate into 3 groups. The "speedies" had a good knowledge of the material, good work habits, and were motivated by the challenge. The second and largest group of the "middles" were progressing steadily. And the third group needed to be prodded along and reminded of goals on a regular basis.

Those in the first group, after completing the requirements in the geometry unit successfully, went on to study probability and graphing using Smarties. This particular learning center took some time to set up but it was very effective and can be used again when appropriate.

The middle group worked on a smaller center involving graphing and the third group did not have an opportunity to explore either of these two centers. The centers were not dangled in front of the students as a carrot to hurry them along but as a valuable vertical learning experience for those who completed the allotted amount of work in less than the scheduled time.

B) I also used an individually-paced math unit supplemented by a computer program that supplied short pre- and post-quizzes for each concept, did the record keeping, and scoring of the quizzes, and generated a unique final exam for each student once they had completed the entire unit.

The students found the computer motivating and enjoyed marking their own quizzes via the computer and receiving immediate feedback.

I, too, marked all their practice assignments, taught difficult concepts to individuals and small tutorial groups, and encouraged the slower moving and sometimes less-motivated students to move along. I found that I had more time to work with those students having difficulty; however, I also noticed I didn't see as much of those students who were moving through the unit easily.

In choosing the geometry unit, the teacher had to know that the resource materials available to the students did an adequate job of explaining the material. The students exercised control over the pace at which they worked.

Notes

In this case, the teacher mentioned seeing those students who were not having difficulty less frequently. It might be important for this teacher, in the future, to make a conscious effort to check in regularly with these students to help keep their enthusiasm up and just to keep in touch.

This particular unit format could be reworked to suit a wide range of grade levels and abilities.

Centers that were of high interest and relevant to the students as they completed the unit of study were also used. We used peer partner learning throughout the unit so students could provide support for one another as they worked.

After completing one individually-paced unit, I found that the whole group working together in a more traditional way was welcomed and allowed us to pull together again for a time.

The Restaurant Unit (A sample unit integrating subject areas)

This unit is on "Restaurants" with the purpose of designing a restaurant. The students are learning and reinforcing specific "knowledge" related to areas of study and particular processes.

Mid-April and we were busy planning which five restaurants we could arrange to visit and study to begin our inter-disciplinary unit on restaurants. The grade 5-6 class was busy going through phone books, in pairs, looking for the phone numbers of nearby restaurants.

We had decided on two fast food places, one large family restaurant, and two small independently run businesses - one a "you-bake" pizza place and the other a Ukrainian restaurant.

Permission forms were written up once we had checked with the managers to arrange for permission and times. Parents knew to expect these forms because we had been keeping them up to date through our regular classroom newsletter produced by the students.

We checked on bus routes and times, and walking distances to some of the closer restaurants. We were training for the upcoming track meet so the long distance run was welcomed - by some!

Working from a list the class had developed of things to look for at the restaurants, students worked in pairs, groups of three, or

individually, to formulate interview questions for staff and specific things to look for. They knew that the reason we were visiting these restaurants was to give them some information for the restaurants they would be creating very soon.

We focused on several aspects.

1. "Environmental friendliness". Previously we had spent several weeks looking at environmental issues in science.

2. Design of the facility. We had an interior designer come in to tell us about design, layout, use of color, and efficient use of space. One component of the restaurant project was to design a "blueprint" or model of their restaurant. We learned how to read simple drawings.

3. The nutritional value of the items on the menu. Was there a wide variety of foods available including "heart smart" items? What was the average cost for each of their families to eat out at each of the five restaurants? (estimating rather than actual) They would be creating menus for their restaurants as well. We had studied nutrition in health earlier in the year so they had a fairly good background for analyzing the restaurants' menus. We used math skills to calculate costs of meals.

4. The fourth component was to look at advertising. A marketing specialist was invited in to discuss the whole area of marketing; the students were extremely excited about his talk and had prepared thoughtful questions prior to his visit. They were studying the advertising used by the five restaurants we visited and used all of this information in the preparation of their own ad campaigns.

5. Staffing was also considered. Students interviewed various staff members in the five restaurants to learn about different responsibilities, shift work, etc. They considered the staffing they would have to do for their own restaurants.

So the five main areas of environment, design, nutrition and pricing, advertising and staffing were all worked into their final projects. It was amazing! Six weeks later we had the

Notes

Environmental Issues - Science, Biology, Social

Restaurant design - Home Economics, Drafting, Art

Menus - Home Economics, Health, Math

Advertising - English, Social Studies, History

Staffing - Psychology, Social Sciences, Sociology, Math

Notes

presentations in our class and then set up displays in the main hallway showcase for others in the school to see.

Enthusiasm for the project was high throughout the duration and feedback from the students and their parents was extremely positive. For many of the students, it was definitely the high point of their school year.

The final products varied considerably but each suited those who created them.

What did I do as a teacher?

- Set up the format and introduced the idea to the students as a possible activity. (Not one student did not want to give it a try.)
- Arranged for the resource people to come and present to the class.
- Helped groups and individuals decide on directions to take, possible resources, and in making decisions.
- Set deadlines for specific portions of the project to be completed in addition to the final presentation week. Restaurant "owners" signed up on a chart to show when they wanted to give their presentations.
- Developed a checklist to help groups and individuals make sure they had included all the components of the projects and were on time.
- Followed up with restaurants we had visited, sending a note from a group of students and myself. (We reviewed letter writing before that.)
- Did direct teaching of skills as required.
- Monitored progress, offered encouragement, advice when requested, and stayed out of the way but remained accessible.
- Developed the evaluation criteria.

Although all students had the same information to work with, they had freedom to choose what they would do with it in the development of their restaurant - its design, advertising, theme, menu, staff, and concern for the environment.

We all worked hard and tied together a lot of things we had studied through the year. If I were to do it again, I would teach presentation skills more specifically and invite the parents and restaurant people in to see our restaurant fair. I have worked through this unit with two different - very different - classes successfully and will use it again if it is of interest to students I work with.

Notes

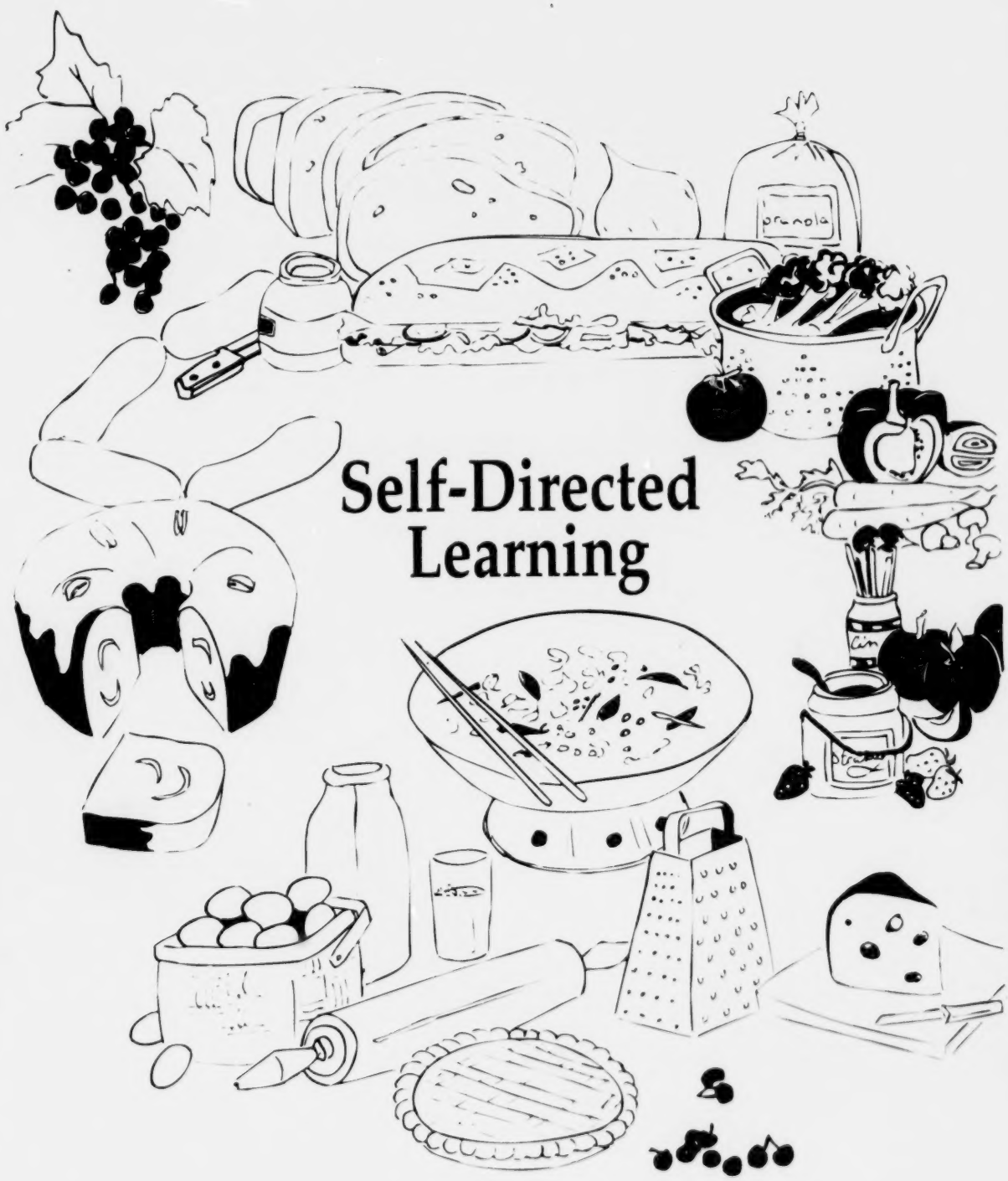
Other Main Themes possibilities - power, energy, social issues

Work Space 5

In what ways did the examples illustrate individualizing through options and choice? How might you incorporate some of these ideas? What other ideas do you have?

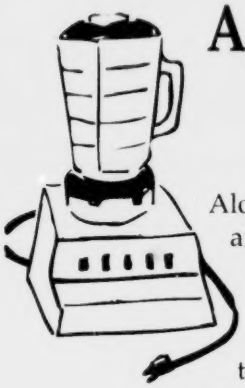
Other options and places to make choices ...

- Learning Centers
- Work Stations
- Learning Packages
- Computer-assisted Programs
- Contracts
- Open-ended Questions
- Research Projects
- Mastery Learning Projects



Self-Directed Learning

Approaching Self-Directed Learning

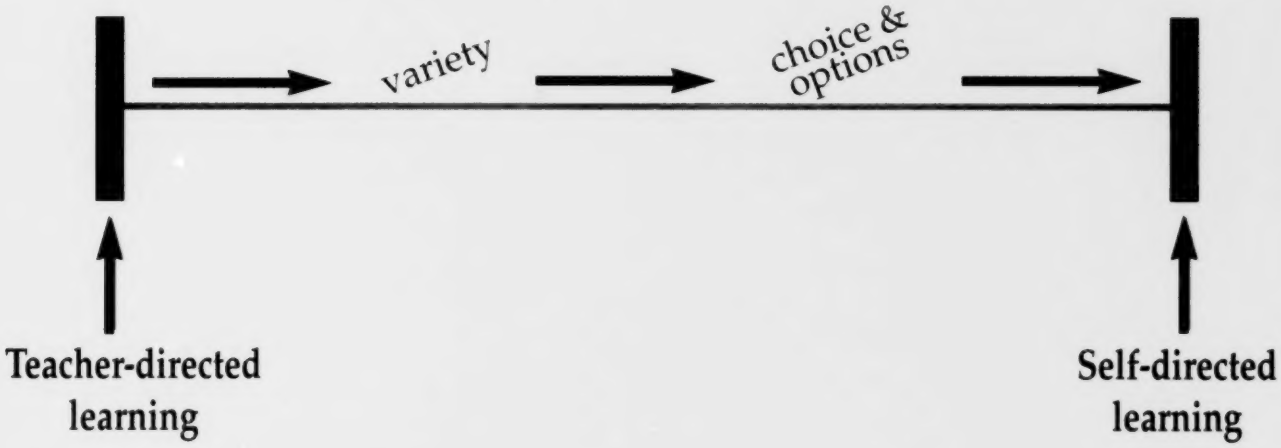


Along the continuum of teacher-directed learning to self-directed learning, students are increasingly responsible for choosing goals, content, activities, and evaluation of the project and their own learning.

Self-directed learning is a process in which individuals figure out what they need to learn and learn it, with or without the help of others. The individual sets goals and time frames, gathers resources, uses strategies that "fit", and evaluates the outcome.

The students are no longer "lost in the crowd", but individuals who are visible and alone in their pursuits, having to accept full responsibility for the outcome of their learning. This is a BIG change from teacher-directed situations where the teacher chooses the content, the goals, the strategies and activities, and the evaluation procedures.

It is very important to keep the continuum in mind when moving from teacher-directed learning to self-directed learning by first exploring variety, and choice and options for students who are accustomed to teacher-directed situations.



My alternate education high school math class was faltering along until I risked self-directed project time over a two-week period. Each student chose something of interest to them. We discussed it, drew up contracts, and off they went! One student took apart and repaired a stereo system, another did a personal genealogical study, a third chose to continue with work in the courses in the regular way. Although each student worked on something different during that time, some of the results I observed were the students' feelings of personal success and accomplishment, and great enthusiasm – even for our math program! Who would have thought!

I wanted to know more about different ways of teaching. The class I had was a real challenge and I didn't feel I was reaching them as successfully as I could. I thought that adding variety to the way I taught would help.

I decided on studying one different approach to teaching by reading articles and resource books, talking to other teachers, watching a video tape, attending a workshop, and observing a colleague use the strategy.

Finally I felt ready to <u>try</u> with my students. It took a lot of planning to organize that first lesson. My colleague was a real help. The lesson didn't go off without a hitch...my students were somewhat confused until I explained the strategy to them. It <u>was</u> successful enough to try again – and again.

And it helped. I'm not sure it was the strategy or the fact the students saw me learning something new that sparked their enthusiasm. That was a few years ago now. Each year since I have tried to learn about another way to teach that I can add to my "bag of tricks".

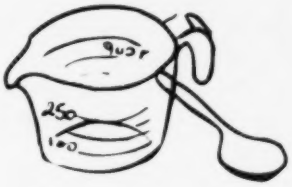
37

Notes

The teacher in this case left the choices and options wide open for the students, and was prepared to accept the projects the students chose in their self-directed learning.

This teacher used self-directed learning to become more familiar with a variety of teaching strategies.

Evaluation



Evaluation has a number of different purposes:

- to supply students with information about their progress;
- to help determine the benefits of a program;
- to assist teachers in their professional growth and development; or
- to provide information to the "public" on how the schools and students are doing.

Effective evaluation:

- relates to the objectives that were set out initially in both the content and the process;
- is cumulative; and
- reflects the purpose for which it was conducted.

When individualizing in your classroom, grades or marks may be difficult to obtain. They may also be an incomplete reflection of each student's progress toward becoming a self-directed learner. Paper and pencil tests may show you the content the student has learned but they cannot show you directly when a student has developed a more mature attitude toward time management and organizational skills, or perseverance and enthusiasm for learning. Figure 1 is an example of a tool to measure the development of skills.

Organizational Skills Growth Chart
Is organized!
Follows through on revisions using same sheet.
Hands in assignments in the right place and on time.
Puts name on assignments.
Hands in assignments.
Puts sheets IN binder IN order.
Uses the binder AND rings.
Uses a binder (but not the rings).
Can find papers more often.
Puts sheets in desk rather than on floor.
Loses papers regularly.

Figure 1

Growth charts and checklists can be used for tracking all different kinds of process skills and they can be adapted to suit your students and the skills they are working on. Students may be able to develop their own charts and share them with you. You might also compare perceptions by looking at the students' growth charts and ones you use for each student. Discussions of the differences can be most beneficial for students and teachers to double check perception of expectations.

The Restaurant Unit Checklist (Figure 2), for the teacher, tracks progress of the products. There is space for checking off rough drafts and putting marks for final products. Each group or individual student can also keep track of their progress by using a simple chart (Figure 3). Once again, frequent comparisons with the teacher's record keeping can help everyone be aware of what is going on.

Restaurant Unit Checklist (Teacher's Copy)

		Tammy Sam Joe	Steven Sherry	Lisa Tania	Tina Jack Alexander Sandy	Robin	Kim	Gerry
Proposal (April 2)	Draft							
	Complete							
Floor Plan/Interiors (April 14)	Draft							
	Complete							
Environmental Considerations (April 21)	Draft							
	Complete							
Menu (April 28)	Draft							
	Complete							
Advertising (May 5)	Draft							
	Complete							
Staffing (May 12)	Draft							
	Complete							
Final Package (May 17)	Draft							
	Complete							
Presentations (May 24-28)	Draft							
	Complete							

Figure 2

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Restaurant Unit Checklist (Student's Copy)

		✔
April 2	Proposal	❑
April 14	Floorplan/Interiors	❑
April 21	Environmental Considerations	❑
April 28	Menu	❑
May 5	Advertising	❑
May 12	Staffing	❑
May 17	Final Package	❑
May	Presentation	❑

Figure 3

It is critical that your students get frequent, concrete feedback on their progress. This is especially important with long-term projects that have many parts. Charts are helpful for both teacher and student. So are regular informal personal interviews. There should be no surprises come reporting time. It only takes one bad experience to bring this point home!

Try to incorporate a wide variety of data collection techniques – anecdotal records; interviews; observation; portfolios; and criterion, norm, and self-referenced strategies. The type of evaluation you do depends on the reason you are doing it.

Work Space 6

Consider any new items you may wish to keep track of as you move into individualizing.

What methods of data collection might work for you and your students?

Diagnostic Test

Anecdotal Records

Monitoring

Quizzes

Portfolios

Criterion-referenced Evaluation

Self-referenced Exams

Interviews

Considerations and Cautions

Considerations

Freedom is a funny thing, especially when preceded by a lack of the same thing. Freedom to make responsible choices takes practice and guidance. Taylor would have pancakes three times a day if given complete freedom to make that choice.

Teachers (and parents) have the responsibility to guide the decision-making process that leads to freedom of choice on larger scales.

It is so important to plan carefully after assessing the situation. Know your students' abilities, interests and skills because different students will be ready for differing amounts of responsibility at different times. You need to be flexible.

When moving along the continuum toward self-directed learning, the teacher has several things to take into consideration:

1. Create a positive environment. (welcoming kitchen)
   - openness to new ideas and options, cooperative spirit, encouraging risk taking, receptive to different ideas rather than right or wrong ones
2. Model. (cook together)
   - organizational skills, enthusiasm for learning, use a variety of resources - print, non-print, human
3. Teach the necessary skills. (using a mixing spoon)
   - finding resources, setting timelines and goals
4. Introduce new ideas and different ways to learn. (broccoflower)
   - space travel, binomial systems, multiculturalism
     observing, interviewing, discussing, focused imaging
5. Share possibilities. (the colorful salad and firm loaf of bread)
   - the diorama, the almost-complete essay, the poster, the recorded interview
6. Provide opportunities for individual and independent success experiences. (add the sugar)
   - choose a topic from a list of ten to research, complete a learning package, use new "technology"

Cautions

- Develop expectations with your students. Everyone has to know what is going on.
- Create systems for monitoring student progress that make sense to you and your students. Students should have ready access to these so they can keep track of their own progress. (such as the examples given on pages 32, 33, and 34).
- Match evaluation to the situation.
- Know how much control and responsibility you can comfortably hand over to each student based on your own beliefs. Token amounts or "lip service" is a disservice to your students.
- Recognize those times when other forms of teaching might best suit the situation at hand. The ideas given here are options to include as part of what you and your students do.
- For students who have had things handed to them and organized for them, a switch to individualizing in a big way may be quite a shock and one that they don't respond to well. Be sensitive to the difference between working toward self-directed learning and parachuting blindfolded into unknown territory.

Work Space 7

At this point you may wish to look back at Work Space #2 where you listed your concerns.

Personal Reflections

Individualizing is more a state of mind than a step-by-step recipe you can follow. The following questions may help in moving toward greater degrees of individualizing in your classroom.

Have I:

- ❑ considered my own feelings about students having more control over their own learning and the choices they will make that may not match the choices I would have made?
- ❑ fostered a climate that will honor individual differences, risk taking, and creativity?
- ❑ taught the necessary skills before starting in on individualizing?
- ❑ asked the students about their interests and observed their abilities?
- ❑ assessed each student's ability and started them each off with success-building experiences?
- ❑ started small?
- ❑ considered how I will evaluate student development? the program? myself?
- ❑ kept the parents and other educators in my school informed about individualizing in our classroom?

Work Space 8

What might you do to start successfully with individualizing in your classroom?

Individualizing Together

Cooking together can be much more valuable than working on your own; especially if it is a special dinner for your extended family. Even planning the menu can be made easier if several cooks work together. Pot lucks have their place!

Others in your school might be trying individualizing in their classrooms. Try sharing ideas and working through concerns. (Personal Reflections could be discussion starters.) Your teacher-librarian may be of great assistance and inspiration to you as you help your students develop the skills they need and search for resources. Much of individualizing rests on resource-based learning.

Teacher teams may be interested in setting up special projects or situations that allow students to have more than one teacher-resource to work with.

I have never really heard of "too many cooks spoiling the broth" if they are discussing ideas as they share a common goal!

Work Space 9

This isn't working!

If you are finding that things just are not working for you and your students, try working through the following:

1. What does "not working" mean in specific, observable terms?
2. What aspects have been successful? How might you build on those successes?
3. Some places to turn ...

   Personal Reflections (p. 38) — Considerations and Cautions (p. 36)

   Individualizing IS (p. 2) — Individualizing is NOT (p. 4)

   Individualizing Together (p. 39)

4. It may be that the combination of all factors at work in your classroom may make any large attempts at individualizing unsuccessful. Consider moving to small steps and fostering the conducive environment (p. 8).

Conclusion

It's quite a journey from being a dependent learner to a self-directed learner - from the spoon-fed infant to the independent, self-sufficient young person, one who won't starve when he or she moves away from home.

Individualizing means letting go in a sensitive, developing way when the time is right. And it is never too early - or late - to begin. As you near the end of this recipe book, here are some Quick Starters for individualizing.

Work Space 10

A spot for your recipes for individualizing in your classroom.

QUICK STARTER #1

Invite students to choose which four questions they want to do out of ten that are given.

Something for Every One

QUICK STARTER #2

Incorporate a variety of teaching strategies into your daily lessons. Inquiry, for example, promotes students getting more involved.

Something for Every One

QUICK STARTER #3

Allow students the opportunity to choose working alone or with a partner in a productive way.

Something for Every One

QUICK STARTER #4

Read Bernice McCarthy's book on planning for a variety of learning styles. (The 4MAT System)

Something for Every One

QUICK STARTER #5

Discuss individualizing with a colleague. Develop programs and projects together, perhaps combining your classes at times.

Something for Every One

QUICK STARTER #6

Let parents know what you and your students are working on – regularly ... perhaps through a weekly newsletter designed by student teams.

Something for Every One

QUICK STARTER #7

Ask open-ended questions that have room for individual input.

Something for Every One

QUICK STARTER #8

Something for Every One

Resources

Bateman, W., (1990). *Open To Question: The Art of Teaching and Learning by Inquiry.* Jossey-Bass Inc., Publishers: San Francisco, CA.

- *A book to spark enthusiasm for teaching, learning, and the individual student.*

Clark, B., (1986). *Optimizing Learning: The Integrative Education Model in the Classroom.* Merrill Publishing Company: Columbus, Ohio.

- *Based on brain research, this book explores ways of opening up the classroom to a greater variety of learners.*

Evans, T., Corsini, R. and Gazda, G., (1990). Individual education and the 4 Rs. *Educational Leadership* V48, No.1, pp. 52-56.

- *An article that explains about schools that are totally dedicated to individualizing for their students.*

Gibbons, M., (1990). *The Walkabout Papers: Challenging students to challenge themselves.* Eduserv, Vancouver, BC.

- *The title says it all.*

Heider, J., (1985). *Tao of Leadership: Leadership Strategies for the New Age.* Bantom Books, New York.

- *Looking at the art of leadership as facilitating and guiding...shifting the focus.*

Manz, C. and Manz, K., (1991) Strategies for facilitating self-directed learning: A process for enhancing human resource development. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, vol. 2, no. 1, Spring 1991. (pp. 3-12).

- *Excellent article for developing self-directed learning.*

McCarthy, B., (1981). *The 4MAT System: Teaching to Learning Styles with Right/Left Mode Techniques.* EXCEL, Inc.: Oak Brook, IL.

- *A way to organize lessons and units for <u>all</u> learning styles.*

Norman, P., (1989). *The Self-Directed Learning Contract: A Guide for Learners and Teachers.* Burnaby, BC. Peter Norman.

- *Step-by-step guide.*

Samples, B., Charles, C. and Barnhart, D., (1977). *The Wholeschool Book.* Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.

- *Information and ideas for the teacher – the person – looking at making a change in their own classroom.*

Tiedt, P. and Tiedt, I., (1991). *Multicultural Teaching: A Handbook of Activities, Information, and Resources* (Third Edition). Allyn and Bacon: Needham Heights, Massachusetts.

- *Looking at individualizing through multicultual eyes.*

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